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BALZAC AND COOPER: *LES CHOUANS*

The influence of Fenimore Cooper upon the work of Balzac is more definite and prominent than has hitherto been supposed. Their relationship will be here displayed in three or four aspects. It will be well to realize first Cooper's vogue in the France of 1830 and to reckon with Balzac's knowledge and criticism of the American romancer. Traces of the latter's footprints in various parts of the *Comédie humaine* will be used as corroborative items. But the surest and most specific evidence of this ascendancy will appear from a comparison of *Les Chouans* (1829) with *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826).

There are two periods of culminating excellence in Cooper's career, tallying with two epochs of his fame in France and in the eyes of Balzac. The first covers the time from the earliest translation of *The Spy* (1822) until about 1830. It is the epoch of the more famous Leather-Stocking volumes and of the first sea-tales, all of which were quickly translated into French. The second period culminates in 1840, which is the date of *The Pathfinder* and of Balzac's chief critical study of Cooper, in the *Revue Parisienne*. As a matter of general vogue and definite influence we are here mainly concerned with the first period.

No less than eighteen titles appear as attributed to Cooper in the *Journal de la Librairie* from 1823 to 1828. These include six duplicates—new editions of the more popular novels—as well as one edition of the complete works up to date, and one title whose

attribution is doubtful. Without copying the bibliographical information of the complete list,¹ I note three editions of *The Spy*, two of *The Pioneers*, two of *The Last of the Mohicans*, and two of *The Prairie*. These are the most important for our purpose, though there are also represented *Precaution*, *Lionel Lincoln* (*Légendes des Treize Républiques*), *The Pilot*, *The Red Rover*, and *Notions of the Americans*—these nine titles including everything that Cooper had published up to 1829. A certain *Redwood* is likewise listed, though this seems to be attributed wrongly to Cooper. The “complete” edition began to appear in 1827 and reprinted most of the above stories. The publishers of nearly all the translations were exactly the two houses with whom Balzac had most to do in his early days—Mame et Delaunay, and Gosselin. The translator was generally Defauconpret, already known for his version of the Waverley Novels.

Professor Lounsbury, in his biography of Cooper,² observes that the French enthusiasm for that author began with *The Spy*, which was translated in the summer of 1822: “In spite of its anonymous character and of some extraordinary blunders in translation, it was warmly received in France. From that country its reputation in no long space of time spread in every direction; translations followed one after another into all the cultivated tongues of modern Europe.” The statement that France made the Continental reputation of *The Spy* may be generalized for Cooper’s other works. Balzac himself expresses the truth when he declares: “Cooper a été bien compris, il a été surtout apprécié par la France.”³

Concerning the *Mohicans* especially, it is often considered in France as Cooper’s masterpiece, and Lounsbury holds that its success was even greater in Europe than in America. “Throughout the whole civilized world the conception of the Indian character, as Cooper drew it in *The Last of the Mohicans* and still further elaborated it in the later Leather-Stocking Tales, has taken permanent hold of the imaginations of men.” This ignores the part played by Chateaubriand in establishing the legendary conception of the noble

¹ For this I am indebted to the kindness of my friend, Professor A. Marin La Meslée of Tulane University.

² T. R. Lounsbury, *James Fenimore Cooper* (“American Men of Letters”), Boston, 1883, p. 36.

³ *Œuvres complètes* (Michel Lévy edition), XXIII, 588.

Indian. Lounsbury seems right, however, in averring that Cooper surpassed even Washington Irving in his Continental and contemporary popularity—the greatest ever achieved by an American; but it is an exaggeration to consider that this fame abroad "could fairly be said to hold its own with that of Sir Walter Scott."¹

The linking of these names, to which every critic is and was impelled, will prove significant in several directions. They had both been welcomed in Paris in 1826, when, according to "the American Scott," at the Princess Galitzin's, "the Scotch and American lions took the field together." It is not impossible that Cooper met Balzac during the same period. At any rate it is important to observe how Cooper's long residence in France must have forwarded his fame. He was in or near Paris from July, 1826, to February, 1828, and again from July, 1830, until some time in the year 1833. The first dates would fall very near the epoch of the composition of *Les Chouans*. During that time Cooper wrote much of *The Prairie* and *The Red Rover*, published respectively at Paris, 1827 and 1828.

He was lionized from within a few weeks after his first arrival at the capital. Later, he presided at meetings and banquets, and was undoubtedly a figure in the "colony" and among the cultured. It is natural to suppose that his residence in Paris would increase the interest attached to his books by the author of *Les Chouans* as well as by other Parisians.

Balzac's opinion of Cooper has been expressed incidentally in a number of places, but nowhere with more point and penetration than in the set article for the *Revue Parisienne* of July, 1840.² I give a short analysis of this, italicizing the points that will have later significance.

He begins in a tone of general eulogy, warm and enthusiastic. He promptly states that Cooper is now the only author worthy of being compared with Scott. "Il ne l'égalera point, mais il a de son génie, et il doit la haute place qu'il occupe dans la littérature moderne à deux facultés, celle de peindre la mer et les marins, celle d'idéaliser les magnifiques paysages d'Amérique." His best works are the

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 55-57. The following facts are also mainly from Lounsbury's fourth chapter.

Œuvres, XXIII, 584-92.

Leather-Stocking series, together with *The Pilot*, *The Red Rover*, and *The Spy*—a criticism with which the verdict of time well agrees. It is hard, continues Balzac, to understand how the same man could have written those intervening things—by which the *Heidenmauer* and the *Homeward Bound* group are probably indicated. “Je ne me prononce pas légèrement,” declares the reviewer, “*j’ai lu et relu les œuvres du romancier, disons le mot vrai, de l’historien américain.*” Here is already an analogy with Balzac’s pretension to be the “historian” or the “secretary” of his own society. He repeats that he shares Scott’s admiration for the two aforesaid faculties of Cooper, next to which he would place the creation, the grandeur, and the originality of Leather-Stocking himself. He observes that “this sublime character links together” the four tales already published. A main feature of Leather-Stocking, in Balzac’s eyes, is then the unity, the linking that he gives to the series which bears his name. Now come some hyperbolical polysyllables: “*Bas-de-Cuir est une statue, un magnifique hermaphrodite moral, né de l’état sauvage et de la civilisation, qui vivra autant que les littératures.*” He is in the same class with Gurth, and it is especially in the creation of this one figure that Cooper has raised himself to the height of Walter Scott—whom Balzac placed far above Byron.

Now reaching his special subject, *The Pathfinder*, which had just been translated as *Le Lac Ontario*, the reviewer declares it to be a fine work, worthy of its three predecessors in the series.¹ Its subject is the lake itself; and Balzac likes simple subjects, which exhibit power of conception. Cooper shows his true greatness in describing the Oswego and its banks. This is the real “Cooper of the wood and wave,” as Stevenson said, mingling, as Balzac says, *his descriptions of natural objects with the ruses of the savages*. Such pictures are inimitable. “Il y a de quoi désespérer tout romancier à qui l’envie prendrait de *suivre les traces de l’auteur américain.*” We shall see that this “envie” confessedly seized Balzac himself. “Jamais l’écriture typographiée (*sic*) n’a plus empiété sur la peinture. *Là est l’école où doivent étudier les paysagistes littéraires, tous les secrets de l’art sont là.*” This suggests a desire and perhaps a fulfilment. He continues, with equal relevancy, that Cooper’s prose not only vividly displays

¹ *The Deerslayer* was not published until the following year—1841.

to us each item in the landscape, "mais elle y parvient *en donnant à la fois les moindres circonstances et l'ensemble.*" Thereby he makes the solitudes interesting, as also by his thrilling disclosures of Indians behind the tree-trunks, under the rocks, in the water. After dwelling on the moving effect of that solitude and calm, Balzac returns to the other effect of the perils "*si bien liés aux accidents du terrain, que vous examinez attentivement les rochers, les arbres, les chutes d'eau, les bateaux d'écorce, les buissons; vous vous incarnez à la contrée; elle passe en vous ou vous passez en elle, on ne sait comment s'accomplit cette métamorphose due au génie; mais il vous est impossible de séparer le sol, la végétation, les eaux, leur étendue, leur configuration, des intérêts qui vous agitent.*"

The insistence on this *procédé* points to a very personal interest in it on the part of Balzac, and I will anticipate by remarking that *Les Chouans* has many such fusions of figures and landscape. Balzac thus crystallizes in the above review his opinion of a device which he had been using more or less for a dozen years and which he uses immediately after this article in *Une Ténébreuse Affaire*.

With regard to Cooper's characters, he is less enthusiastic. They are somewhat diminished by the grand scenery. And although he thanks the author for portraying humble personages, several of whom are certainly "natural," yet there are various exceptions; the heroine, as usual, together with Cap and Muir are *manqués*. Leather-Stocking, however, dominates as always. "Cette figure si profondément *mélancolique* y est en quelque sorte expliquée." In the *Curé de village*, a year or two previously, Balzac had written of the "melancholy" talent of Cooper, shown in the magnificent poetry of *The Prairie*.¹ The choice of that note seems peculiar and subjective.

The handling of the secondary characters in *The Pathfinder*, Balzac holds, reveals clearly Cooper's weakness, instanced also by details in the "préparation du drame." He is particularly inferior to Scott in his lack of humor, his ever-unsuccessful desire to divert you. The means chosen is the unfortunate insistence upon a *tic*, a "gag"—"*une même plaisanterie sotte . . . un entêtement quelconque*"—laid down at the beginning and reappearing wearisomely

¹ *Œuvres*, XIV, 66.

throughout the book. Hence the "dadas" of Cap, Muir, David Gamut, *et al.* Scott invented the malady, but Cooper has made of it a plague.

We may omit discussion of this artistic point, merely recalling to what an extent Balzac himself has used the *tic* and the *dada*, though to be sure he is generally clever about varying the expression. Another discussion to be passed over here is that which American critics have raised concerning the value of the foregoing opinion on Cooper's characters. The best view concedes its justice, and it is noteworthy that nearly all students of Cooper quote freely from this and other Balzacian comments, thus proving the importance and insight of the Frenchman's criticisms. Lounsbury goes so far as to say that these carry more weight than any other foreign studies of Cooper. And Brownell, while differing from the depreciation of Cooper's characters, is aware of the fact that in the eyes of the generation which followed Chateaubriand the depiction of nature was of more importance than psychology.¹

This is the next antithesis which Balzac sets forth (after some exaggerated reprehending of Cooper for his falsely supposed dislike of the French), and he sets it forth again by comparison with Scott. By the side of the latter, the American novelist has said nothing truly philosophical or impressive, when one takes a backward look. Both of these writers are cold, having offered up passion as a sacrifice to the blue-stockings of their countries—a view that Balzac repeats elsewhere. But the chief contrast is that Scott deals with humanity and Cooper with nature. Even in *Le Lac Ontario*, "vous ne trouverez pas un portrait qui vous fasse penser, qui vous ramène en vous-même par une réflexion fine et ingénieuse, *qui vous explique les faits, les personnes, leurs actions*"—which, in other words, consists of a writer's aside such as I, Balzac, am constantly contributing for the greater restlessness of aesthetic critics, and, it must be admitted, for the better intelligence of the reader in matters relating to the causal linking of topography, costume, physique, character, action, and what not. . . . But it is not true that Cooper has no such

¹ Lounsbury, pp. 241, 284, etc.; W. C. Brownell, *American Prose Masters*, New York, 1909, pp. 25-30. See also W. B. Clymer, *James Fenimore Cooper*, Boston, 1900, pp. 120-22, and Edgar Saltus, *Balzac*, Boston, 1884, *passim*; also F. Lawton, *Balzac*, London, 1910, pp. 15, 195.

reflections or asides. On the contrary, in common with most novelists of his age, he has a great many, and certain of these will offer analogies with the manner of Balzac.

The latter concludes his general confrontation of Cooper and Scott by declaring that they are two colossi all the same. Now, a more specific point is the way they both handle battles. The principle is laid down that "il est impossible à l'art littéraire de peindre les faits militaires au delà d'une certaine étendue." It is stated that neither Scott nor Cooper has tried to depict a campaign; they try to give first, by small samples, the spirit of the combatants; then Scott would choose as battlefield a "terrain circonscrit" (the Battle of Bothwell Bridge would be a case in point), and even to get this before us long preparations were necessary. Of Cooper's method several illustrations will be given in the course of this paper, and from Balzac himself an excellent skirmish is to be found at the beginning of *Les Chouans*. As an example of the other and the wrong kind of thing, Eugène Sue is cited. Big descriptions of regular battlefields, such as Sue tries, become impossible feats for the reader's attention, "quand l'auteur ne marie pas les évènements et les hommes aux accidents de la nature, et ne les explique pas les uns par les autres, comme ont fait Cooper et Walter Scott."

This penetrating article thus ends with an important emphasis.

Mr. G. D. Morris, in his study on French criticisms of Cooper,¹ considers that Balzac's article is by all odds the best of these. He summarizes the interesting opinions of Ste.-Beuve—who also held that Cooper's *forte* was description—of G. Sand and others. He gives extracts to show that both imitation and criticism of Cooper were rife in France of the twenties; in the thirties he drew less critical attention, until his vogue was revived by Balzac's study. This impresses Mr. Morris for its enthusiasm, its sureness of taste, and its emphasis on the picturesque quality characteristic of romanticism. In fact, Balzac evinces here a combination of taste and judgment that is rare with him and that is best accounted for by the assumption (otherwise amply proved) of a deep interest and knowledge of his material. His particular esteem for *The Pathfinder* and Cooper's

¹ *Fenimore Cooper et Edgar Poe, d'après la critique française du dix-neuvième siècle*. Thèse, Paris, 1912.

landscapes are again evidenced in an anecdote reported by Léon Gozlan and too often detailed to bear repeating.¹ Also, in writing *Le Lys dans la vallée*, its author here divulges, he followed Cooper in the intention "de faire une part splendide au paysage."

It may be well to summarize those features which Balzac, critically, has thus stressed and of which we may expect to find some imitation in his own work. The chief are these: the treatment of landscape in detail, with an eye to its causal and sociological connections; the feature of topographical incidents used in the war-maneuvers of a primitive people; the feature of linking a series of stories by reappearing characters; the feature of giving in descriptions both the details and the *ensemble*, which may mean an enforcement of the main characteristic; the feature of the repeated *tic* or "gag"; finally, the explanatory asides, which Balzac did not find in Cooper, but which we find in both.

The next question is that of dates. How early did the French novelist read the American, to what extent, and with what effect? The dates are not very numerous, but their evidence, so far as it goes, is clear.

It should be remembered that *The Last of the Mohicans* had appeared, in English and in French, in 1826. Now in a letter of 1830, when Balzac is going by boat from Touraine "au fond de la Bretagne," he writes: "Oh, mener une vie de *Mohican*, courir sur les rochers, nager en mer, respirer en plein l'air, le soleil! Oh, que j'ai conçu le sauvage! Oh, que j'ai admirablement compris les *corsaires*, les aventuriers. . . . La vie, c'est du courage, de bonnes *carabines*, l'art de se diriger en pleine mer."²

There is in this a possible reference to *The Red Rover* (*Le Corsaire rouge*, 1828),³ and an unmistakable reference to *The Last of the Mohicans*; for *The Prairie* and *The Pioneers* have little to do with the "vie de Mohican." This view is supported by an allusion in the *Physiologie du mariage* to "un Mohican à l'opéra."⁴ And the *Physiologie du mariage* appeared in December, 1829, much of it having

¹ Gozlan, *Balzac intime: Balzac en pantoufles*, etc., Paris, 1886 (1856), pp. 46-49. Cf. Morris, pp. 29-30, and Lawton, p. 195.

² *Correspondance*, p. 73. Le Breton, in quoting this (p. 79), rightly dwells on the "savage" impulse that Balzac received from Cooper.

³ For other references to piracy see *La Femme de trente ans*, *Gobseck*, etc.

⁴ *Œuvres*, XVII, 313.

been written during several years before.¹ Again in *Gobseck*, written in 1829-30, there is the following passage concerning the hero: "S'il était content de sa journée, il se frottait les mains en laissant échapper par les rides crevassées de son visage une fumée de gaieté, car il est impossible d'exprimer autrement le jeu muet de ses muscles où se peignait une sensation comparable au rire à vide de *Bas-de-Cuir*"² (Leather-Stocking). The miser has a "férocity de sauvage," and by way of a repeated *tic* we find this: "Gobseck se mit à rire, de ce rire muet qui lui était particulier."³ This last is the very language used of Leather-Stocking in the *Mohicans*, and we may at once class Gobseck's laugh as a frank imitation.

I have collected several dozen other references, mostly from the early *Scènes de la vie privée* (1830-32), either specifically to Cooper's works or to Indian life in general.⁴ But I reserve these for later study, since enough has been said to show that this epoch, from about 1828-32, is the time when Balzac underwent his first *grande passion* for Cooper.

As to whether the *Mohicans* really counted in *Les Chouans*, we have Balzac's own statement, in a letter of December, 1843: "J'ai néanmoins corrigé *Les Chouans* pour cette troisième édition. C'est décidément un magnifique poème; je ne l'avais jamais lu. Dix ans se sont écoulés depuis que je l'ai corrigé et publié en deuxième édition. . . . Il y a là tout Cooper et tout Walter Scott, plus une passion et un esprit qui n'est chez aucun d'eux."⁵

If one objects that this is a very loud blast of vanity and particularly that the phrase "tout Cooper et tout Scott" should be taken rather in a flamboyant than a derivative sense, I am willing to regard it simply as one hint in a cumulative chain. It would

¹ Spoelberch de Lovenjoul, *Histoire des Œuvres de Balzac*, 1879, p. 207. This is the authority for all such dates.

² *Œuvres*, III, 467.

³ *Ibid.*, 512.

⁴ See *Adieu*, XVI, 164, 196; *El Verdugo*, XVI, 218; *La Vendetta*, V, 307. All of these and *Gobseck* as well are of 1830. In the following year appeared the *Peau de chagrin* from which there are four such allusions: XV, 17, 30, 37, 233. Of a later period are passages from the *Curé de village*, XIV, 133, 178; *Une Ténébreuse Affaire*, XII, 361, 367, 405, 421; and *Les Paysans*, XIV, 322, 347, 389 (see also below, p. 12).

The phrase "à la manière des sauvages" is frequent. There is recurrent reference to Cooper. We learn from the *Lettres à l'étrangère* (II, 17-22, 229, 283) that Balzac at one time planned to dramatize *The Spy*.

⁵ *Lettres à l'étrangère*, II, 246.

indicate that at any rate Balzac knew Cooper at the time of composing *Les Chouans*. What exactly was that period? Without going into the debate between L. Séché¹ and J. Haas,² I think we may rely on the opinion of the latter that the story was mainly written in the autumn of 1828, *after* the visit to Fougères, which took place in the late summer of that year. At any rate, the period of composition was clearly some time in 1828, and not before "August, 1827," as Balzac misdated it, wilfully and *après coup*. Since we know from the preceding quotations that Balzac imitated something of Cooper's in *Les Chouans* and that he was familiar with the *Mohicans* at least by 1829, the supposition that this acquaintanceship began a year or so earlier involves no great risk—provided a plausible relationship between the two volumes can be shown. The probability is that Balzac knew most of these romances shortly after their appearance.

Several critics have expressed the opinion that the influence of Cooper shows in the *Comédie humaine*, both broadly in the creation of certain types and more incidentally with regard to the effect of the *Mohicans* upon *Les Chouans*.³ The latter predication, then, is neither new nor surprising; but nowhere have I found detailed proof of the influence nor any analysis of similar features in the two stories.

The other godfathers of *Les Chouans* have been more closely studied. Haas sees mainly reminiscences of Chateaubriand and Nodier in several descriptions: that of the Vallée du Coüesnon, the lake at La Vivetière, and the vapors that steal over another valley scene.⁴ Maigron and Le Breton tend to emphasize the dominion of Scott; and it would be idle to deny that the book contains a great deal of Scott, some Chateaubriand, and perhaps a little Nodier. Balzac's more general remarks on Indian life and character, including some of those quoted in this paper, may plausibly be traced either to Chateaubriand or to such well-known collections of travels as the

¹ "Balzac à Fougères," *Revue Bleue*, 1901, II, 357-62.

² "Balzac Studien," *ZfFSL*, XXX, 157-59.

³ Ste.-Beuve, *Portraits contemporains*, II, 338; Brownell, p. 24; Le Breton, p. 87. This writer deprecates the long stay that Balzac must have made in the "wigwam de Chingachgook" and his superfluity "de Mohicans en spencer ou de Hurons en redingote" (*ibid.*, pp. 82-83).

⁴ *ZfFSL*, XXXIII, 128 ff.

Lettres édifiantes or the *Voyages du Baron de Lahontan*.¹ The latter, however, deals with the Hurons rather than the Mohicans; this race, as seen through Cooper's eyes, still remains the predominant analogy for *Les Chouans*.

The question of antecedents has its importance, because the book is a turning-point in Balzac's career. It is the first acknowledged work of his pen, the first-published of the *Comédie humaine*; Haas, Baldensperger, and others now agree that in spite of its romanticism we have here a monument marking the beginning of Balzac's true method,² especially, adds Haas, in what concerns topography and documentation.³

In noting resemblances, I have used the standard edition of *Les Chouans*,⁴ as last revised by its author in 1845.⁵ The edition of 1834 (the second) already differed considerably from the first form,⁶ but as the latter is unfortunately inaccessible at present, this study aims only at establishing the connection between Balzac's standard text and *The Last of the Mohicans*.

On the other hand, I have been able to use the translation of the *Mohicans* which Balzac pretty certainly knew—the version by Defauconpret, now published in an "édition courante" by Garnier, under the title of *Le Dernier des Mohicans: Histoire de mil sept cent cinquante-sept*. Does not this suggest *Le Dernier Chouan ou la Bretagne en 1799* (1800)—titles of the first and second edition respectively?⁷ In spite of Chateaubriand before and Bulwer Lytton afterward, the joint use of this "dernier" is another strong hint. The Defauconpret translation is by no means despicable. It is free on occasion, but in the main trustworthy; and, as several Frenchmen have perceived, it imports various literary merits into the original, notably in rendering more probable Cooper's stilted dialogue as well as in tempering the effect of the monotonous "gags"—though it seems

¹ Published in French and in English, 1703; many subsequent editions; alluded to by Balzac in *La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote*, *Œuvres*, I, 59.

² I hope to show this in a study of Balzac's realistic method.

³ *ZfFSL*, XXXIII, 101.

⁴ *Œuvres*, XII, 1-310.

⁵ See *Correspondance*, pp. 418, 425.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.197: "Mais quoi que je fasse, j'ai peur que l'écolier ne s'y montre toujours trop." See also *Lettres à l'étrangère*, pp. 7, 154, 160.

⁷ Lovenjoul, pp. 145-46.

that enough were left to irritate Balzac. Where it loses, of course, is in the flavor of the soil, the autochthonous truth of Hawkeye's speeches and personality, and in much that concerns the Indians.

The several heads under which I shall divide the resemblances are, first, racial similarities, then the connection between the characters, incidents, customs, topography, and warfare. The verbal likenesses will generally be found incorporated with the above.

It seems fairly clear that Balzac desired to present in some detail an analogy between the wild Breton peasants and Cooper's Indians—a comparison to which he returns in *Les Paysans*.¹ Several passages that indicate this intention appear in the first twenty pages of *Les Chouans*, where the word "sauvage" occurs over a dozen times and usually with reference to Indians. The first passage alludes to the appearance of the bestial and devoted Marche-à-Terre, who is *par excellence* the Cooperesque figure of the collection and who is compared by the Republican soldiers to an animal browsing in a field and "aux sauvages de l'Amérique."² On the next page Balzac speaks of "la vie sauvage" in Brittany and of a "nombre de sauvages semblables à celui qui vient de comparaître dans cette Scène." Immediately afterward, still describing the nature of the Bretons, he emits the general and significant statement that primitive conditions tend to make "les habitants de ces campagnes plus pauvres de combinaisons intellectuelles que ne le sont les Mohicans et les Peaux-Rouges de l'Amérique septentrionale, mais aussi grands, aussi rusés, aussi durs qu'eux. La place que la Bretagne occupe au centre de l'Europe la rend beaucoup plus curieuse à observer que ne l'est le Canada." The last sentence suggests a conscious rivalry with Cooper; as for casually placing his savages in Canada, that would be natural from the French standpoint, historically closer to the Hurons than to the Mohicans. But a little farther on, in speaking of Breton warfare, Balzac returns to the proper American soil. "Il y avait de la conviction dans ces trahisons. C'était des sauvages qui servaient Dieu et le roi à la manière dont les Mohicans font la guerre."³

Apart from the wider racial resemblances, there are in these pages several specific allusions to savage customs. Hulot, the

¹ *Œuvres*, XIV, 294, 308.

² XII, 13.

³ XII, 16.

Commandant of the Republicans, while on the alert for an alarm, "consulta le sable de la route, à la manière des sauvages, pour tâcher de découvrir quelques traces de ces invisibles ennemis."¹ Here also we may place the later conduct of the romantic heroine, Marie de Verneuil, who, "semblable à un sauvage d'Amérique, interrogeait les fibres du visage de son ennemi lié au poteau, et brandissait le casse-tête avec grâce. . . ."²

But as shown in many places, Marche-à-Terre is pre-eminently the "savage." His look is distinguished by "l'ironie sauvage"; he, like Cooper's Magua, disappears from the midst of suspicious foes, "avec la rapidité d'un chat sauvage"; he displays a "joie sauvage" at finding gold, and a "tendresse sauvage" with his sweetheart. Indeed the adjective is applied to him with almost wearisome iteration, and it is also applied to the Chouans in general, though with less frequency. Their battle-cries are "sauvages" and the dying Chouan, who is tattooed, has a "figure rude et sauvage." There is thus a definite likeness between Cooper's Peaux-Rouges and the Peaux-de-biques, as the Bretons are called from their costume. In his preface, Cooper marks the chief qualities of the Mohican by saying that in war he is ruthless, self-denying, and daring; while in peace, he is just, hospitable, and superstitious.³ Balzac points out in the Chouan his ferocity, faithfulness, simplicity, and generally the more heroic virtues; his superstition and self-devotion in warfare are frequently dwelt upon. The Indian, says Cooper, "draws his metaphors from the clouds, the seasons, the birds, the beasts, and the vegetable world." True; so does Cooper himself, naturally; so does Balzac, with more pains, ever seeking figures that are appropriate to the calling, whether of soldier or peasant. Another parallel in the language is to be found in the nature of the sounds and voices. The Indians in the *Mohicans*—Chingachgook, Uncas, old Tamenund—usually speak in *guttural* tones, and this adjective is kept in the

¹ XII, 20.

² XII, 121. Balzac italicizes "casse-tête," thus indicating probably that it is his own (poor) translation of Defauconpret's more guarded "tomahawk." The above quotation suggests Cooper's description of Uncas running the gauntlet.

³ My references to Cooper are to the "Mohawk" edition of the *Complete Works*, 32 vols., New York, Putnam, 1896-. It seems needless from now on to give the page references for the shorter quotations. Anyone tolerably familiar with *Les Chouans* or Cooper can place most of them from the context.

French translation. We hear in *Les Chouans* of "les sons rauques d'une voix bretonne"; Marche-à-Terre's voice is characterized by "sons rauques et gutturaux"; and "guttural" here and elsewhere is almost a favorite adjective of Balzac's as it was of Cooper's.

Other important characteristics of Marche-à-Terre¹ are, first, that quality which I shall call animalism—the *rapprochement* between a human and various animals of which Balzac is so fond—and these Indian attributes: his laconic speech; his control of emotion under suspicious observation (again like Magua)—he is sphinx-like and has a "figure impassible" in danger; his agility "d'un animal sauvage"; his keen senses which "devaient avoir acquis la finesse de ceux des sauvages"; his heavy *carabine*, so often associated with its owner, like that of Hawkeye ("La Longue Carabine"); and the whole matter of his detention and escape in the first skirmish, whose circumstances—foes in the camp, rescue, ambush, surprise, signals—are much like the first affrays in the *Mohicans*.

The stoicism of the Indians, which is imitated even by Hawkeye, their keenness and agility, are too often mentioned in the *Mohicans* to require detailing. Still other features of Marche-à-Terre are his "cri bestial," his appearance of being "taillé comme à coups de hache," and his long shining hair, like the hair of his goatskin. Only the last is strikingly Indian, and indeed the short squatness of the Breton's figure is not to our purpose. But I would call attention to the way in which that figure is put together. One characteristic, that of size, is insisted on throughout. He is "large des épaules," he has the head "presque aussi grosse que celle d'un bœuf," his nostrils are thick, his lips are big, and he has "grands et ronds yeux noirs." This preference for central, sometimes artificial, unity in a description is one of the things that has impressed me most in the method of Balzac, and, incidentally, good illustrations of that *procédé* form the main novelty of Faguet's recent study.² Let me recall that Balzac pointed out Cooper's skill in the *ensemble* of a description. David Gamut, the quaint psalm-singer, is described by Cooper from the keynote of "contrariety in his members."³ A

¹ XII, 10 ff.

² E. Faguet, *Balzac* ("Grands Écrivains Français"), Paris, 1913.

³ *The Last of the Mohicans*, p. 8.

similar peculiarity of construction and, for another person, a sort of squatness—which more nearly corresponds with Marche-à-Terre—are used as keynotes in *The Prairie*.¹ It would be difficult to prove, without a great deal of study in Scott and elsewhere, that Balzac derives this favorite practice from Cooper; but once more the similarity is striking. The same must be said concerning the device of reappearing characters. The French novelist was impressed with the American's use of this, and beyond that statement one hesitates to go. So little is known about the history of this celebrated Balzacian procedure that any definite contribution should be welcomed; the subject is now being attacked. The pertinent query meantime remains: Who more plausibly than Cooper can have given this hint to Balzac and possibly to Dumas père?

Among the other characters, Hawkeye's inward laugh, already seen as used for *Gobseck*, calls for fresh attention. The trait is mentioned and described early in the English *Mohicans*, but in the French translation for some pages it is reduced to a commonplace "souriant" or "baissant la voix." Only in the middle of the book do we reach this passage:² "Enfin, tous ses traits exprimèrent un accès de rire, sans produire pour cela le moindre son, expression *qui lui était particulière*,³ et que l'habitude des dangers lui avait apprise." This *tic* has perhaps a connection with Hulot's martial "grimace," doubtfully taken for a sort of smile by his soldiers. Hawkeye gives vent to his silent laughter while he is disguised in a bear's skin—a disguise which Uncas also assumes—and Marche-à-Terre, wearing the same thing, is once taken for a bear even by his sweetheart. Finally, Hawkeye's glance, like that of all the Indians, is keen and roving, "as if in quest of game"; and Balzac's conscripts look stealthily at the woods and rocks, also like a dog scenting game.

We are not through with the keen eyes yet. The villains of these stories are respectively Magua and Corentin. The latter's eyes are appropriately green, and again restless: "*Cet incroyable, dont les petits yeux vont incessamment d'un côté du chemin à l'autre, comme s'il y voyait des Chouans.*"⁴ As for Magua, Cooper stresses

¹ Pp. 50 and 62.

² Defauconpret, p. 265.

³ The exact phrase used of Gobseck; see above, p. 9.

⁴ XII, 60.

"the tremulous glances of his organs, which seemed not to rest a single instant on any particular object and which at the same time could be hardly said to move." When Chingachgook is on the alert, "his quick and rapid glances ran *incessantly* over every object." Others of the Indians, even the children, have this quick rolling eye, and Corentin's is not the only case where Balzac dwells upon the power of the *regard*, a favorite word with him. A questionable allusion to Chingachgook is the phrase concerning immense roots that crawl about, "*semblables à de gros serpents*"—a comparison repeated later.

The names, especially the *noms de guerre* of the characters, have in the two stories this similarity, that they are usually symbolic and physical. In Cooper, we find *Œil-de-Faucon* or *La Longue Carabine*, *Le Gros Serpent*, and *Le Cerf Agile*; also *Le Renard Subtil* and *La Main Ouverte*. In Balzac, there are *Beau-Pied* and *La-Clef-des-Cœurs* among the soldiers, and among the peasants *Marche-à-Terre*, *Galope-Chopine*,¹ *Pille-Miche*,² and *Mène-à-bien*—the last, being conferred, like Hawkeye, for good conduct in the course of the action. Balzac's names have also some historical analogies,³ but they still afford interesting parallels with those of Cooper.

Among the incidents, we will consider first the private execution of *Galope-Chopine*, by the two other Bretons, one of whom is his cousin and friend. *Le Breton*⁴ thinks this the capital scene in the book and believes that it was suggested by the affair of the Porteous mob, in the early chapters of *The Heart of Midlothian*. But that episode, which is virtually a lynching of an officer of the law, is a very public deed and has nothing to do with supposed treachery; whereas the two Bretons behead *Galope-Chopine* in his own house, because they think he has betrayed their leader. It is almost a family affair and to my thinking, if derivative at all, it resembles more closely the family judgment-scene in *The Prairie*, where the squatter condemns and prepares to execute his brother-in-law for murdering his son. There it is a question of treachery, with the other painful element of private feeling warring with the claims of justice. The

¹ Mug-Chaser.

² Bread-Stealer.

³ See Balzac's remarks in connection with "*le Gars*," XII, 37, 53.

⁴ P. 88, footnote.

situation in *El Verdugo*, where a brother and son is required to execute his whole family, may also be compared.

Other incidents in *Les Chouans*, which have a certain Cooperesque quality, are these. Marie de Verneuil is made prisoner by the Bretons, as Cora is captured by the Hurons; and as the green veil of the latter is made the clue of her identification and pursuit, so the veil of Marie, floating outside of her carriage, announces that she has made good her escape. Unconsciously imitating the Indians, the peasant, Barbette, covers the fire with green *genêts*, in order to make the smoke thicker. A countryman undertakes to prove to the Commandant that the Chouans are numerous: "Il amena Hulot à un endroit du plateau où le sable avait été remué comme avec un râteau; puis, après le lui avoir fait remarquer, il le conduisit assez avant dans un sentier où ils virent les vestiges du passage d'un grand nombre d'hommes. Les feuilles y étaient empreintes dans la terre battue."¹ In much the same way does Cooper describe an "obvious trail" as imprinted in the leaves. When Le Gars escapes from Barbette's cottage, he hurls himself through seven people, somewhat as Hurry Harry does in *The Deerslayer*; but the fact that for a time he is pursued by the eager Gudin alone, while the others watch, reminds one of the way Uncas outstripped his comrades in pursuing Magua; and the whole swift and tragic *dénouement*, including the death of the heroine, the shooting and the adventures among rocks, the proposed escapes by disguise, and the final confrontation of the two funeral biers of the dead hero and maiden, is in so far identical in both stories. Other features, of course, widely differentiate their finish, and in regard to this whole matter of incidents it would be unwise to insist on any one as necessarily from Cooper; only taken together they add more plausibility to a connection already fairly well established.

Under the head of customs, I claim no more than an analogy, conscious perhaps on the part of Balzac, between the "cri de chouette," which is the regular signal of the Chouans, and the "cri du hibou," which is used by Hawkeye. Historically, of course, the Chouans² were so named from their call, which allows the Indian signal to

¹ XII, 29.

² See Meyer-Lübke, s.v.

remain only as a coincidence between primitive peoples. But what shall we say of the dead Chouan who bears on his breast "une espèce de tatouage de couleur bleuâtre qui représentait un cœur enflammé"? This sign certainly suggests the totem of the Mohicans, the blue tortoise skilfully tattooed on their breasts. The Indian council-fire is dwelt upon by Cooper, the debate which is preceded by a deliberate, rotatory, and silent smoking of the pipe. Marche-à-Terre and his comrades on several occasions substitute the *chinchoire* for the pipe, and the former takes his pinch "en homme qui voulait se préparer pour quelque action grave." Is this another conscious coincidence on the author's part? Cooper's Indians, both here and in *The Prairie*, are prone to inflammatory orations in the cause of vengeance. There is such a speech of Magua's, constructed very similarly to one by the Abbé Gudin,¹ in which either orator makes appeal to vengeful feelings, by using the sting of scorn, by dwelling on individual losses, with names and circumstances. The detailed effect on the audience is given in both cases, and the phrase, "Magua had so artfully blended the natural sympathies with the religious superstition of the audience," might equally well be applied to the Abbé.

The question of topography is more difficult. Let us remember how often in criticizing Cooper, Balzac returns to the former's descriptions of landscape, especially as intimately connected with human figures. There are broad descriptive reaches in *Les Chouans*, sometimes detailed on plans similar to those of Cooper. The three masterpieces of this kind are the valley of the Couësnon as seen by the departing soldiers; the castle of La Vivetière and its environs; and the long panorama of the view from Fougères, together with much detail regarding the site itself.

The second of these particularly contains definite touches in the manner of the American. As the travelers are nearing the castle, the effect of furtiveness and perhaps the stealthy invasion of human figures are prepared for in this sentence: "Le murmure du vent, le bruissement des touffes d'arbres, le bruit des pas mesurés de l'escorte, donnèrent à cette scène ce caractère solennel qui accélère les battements du cœur." The *château* itself is described as a kind

¹ XII, 217-18.

of natural fortress, surrounded by two ponds, which have "berges sauvages," with leafless "aquatic" trees.¹ The maid, Francine, looking out on these banks at nightfall, becomes suspicious of their appearance. "Elle entendit bruire les ronces de la berge et aperçut au clair de la lune la figure de Marche-à-Terre qui se dressa par-dessus la noueuse écorce d'un vieux saule. Il fallait connaître le Chouan pour le distinguer au milieu de cette assemblée de truissés ébranchés parmi lesquelles la sienne se confondait si facilement." After the interview with Madame du Gua, "le sauvage . . . disparut dans l'écorce du saule." A little later there is a repetition of this theme with variations. Francine, again looking out on the pond, observes the shadows of the willows and notes the uniform bending of their branches caused by a slight breeze. "Tout à coup elle crut apercevoir une de leurs figures remuant sur le miroir des eaux par quelques-uns de ces mouvements irréguliers et spontanés qui trahissent la vie." Not being a reader of Cooper, Francine thinks at first that this is only some configuration due to the shining of the moon through the foliage; but soon she realizes that it is a man. Then comes another, and still others, while the little shrubs on the bank move violently up and down. The whole hedge is agitated "like a large serpent." The girl rushes into the courtyard, pauses and listens, but discovers "aucune trace de ce sourd bruissement semblable à celui que peuvent produire les pas d'une bête fauve dans le silence des forêts."

All the stealthiness of Indian ambush is in these passages. If specific instances are desired of that fusion of figure and landscape, here are two from the *Mohicans*: "Immovable as that rock, of which each appeared to form a part, they lay, with their eyes roving, without intermission, along the dark margin of trees that bounded the adjacent shores of the narrow stream." And again: "The naked tawny bodies of the crouching urchins blended so nicely, at that hour, with the withered herbage."

The description of the panorama from Fougères has no general analogue in the *Mohicans*, but there are a few small touches that may be mentioned. Balzac refers to the Breton scenery as "cette nature dont le principal caractère est une âpreté sauvage." More

¹ XII, 137-38.

important is his device, used several times, of summarizing for clearness the main features of the topography. Cooper, since *The Pioneers*, had also adopted this practice, though not with such consistency as Balzac.

The topography of both authors is closely linked with the nature of the warfare, and the necessity of that connection is dwelt upon by both to a considerable extent. We have seen the constituents of the Republicans' first skirmish with the Chouans, after which the latter spread out into the country. This habit of scattering and hiding separately behind trees, rushes or broom-plant, and hedges is indicated in the verb "s'égailler," which is often used. Balzac thus generalizes this warfare: "Les évènements de cette lutte intestine contractèrent quelque chose de la sauvage âpreté qu'ont les mœurs en ces contrées." And he goes on to detail the elements: each flowery hedge might conceal an invisible aggressor, each field was a fortress, each tree a trap or a stratagem. When the heroine is walking across country, it is stated that "Mlle de Verneuil comprit alors la guerre des Chouans. En parcourant ces routes elle put mieux apprécier l'état de ces campagnes." They consist of thick hedges, roads that are hollow and almost impassable, with the pathway by the side, which is called a *rote*, the *échelier*, which is a tree-trunk used as a cumbersome gate, the isolated fields, which form together a chessboard aspect, and always the *genêts* for ambushes.¹

The Chouans, as appears several times, have the advantage in their own country, where the soldiers are novices. One is reminded of General Braddock's misfortunes with the Indians, and Cooper, commenting on that defeat, intimates that it was caused by English carelessness and lack of adaptability. Elsewhere he remarks on the "simplicity of the Indian contests" and the usefulness of artillery. And Hawkeye, on another occasion, says: "You may here see the philosophy of an Indian fight. It consists mainly in a ready hand, a quick eye, and a good cover."

These principles are shortly put into practice, in an affray which may be compared with the last skirmish in *Les Chouans*. The approach against the Hurons is made along the bed of a brook, which is lined with trees in various stages of decay. These are of course

¹ XII, 15-16, 212-13.

used as cover, and a charge is made by rapidly darting from tree to tree. In the Chouan affair, conducted more in the open fields and finally among the rocks, similar means of defense are employed. Gudin, in particular, saves himself by dodging from one apple tree to another, "en saisissant pour courir le moment où les Chasseurs du Roi chargeaient leurs armes." This last detail is also mentioned several times by Cooper.

It would be too tedious to exemplify general traits which are common to both authors; they prove nothing except similarity in method. Such are the habitual explanatory asides, often inserted to point out a sociological connection: an external feature of person or landscape "announces" with Balzac; it "denotes" with Cooper. Such are also the historical *aperçus*, based probably on those of Scott, leading on to a clearer understanding of situation or character. Since it has been necessary once more to mention the name of Scott, it will be wise to admit that some of the *procédés* listed in this paper will in the last analysis go back to him; there will probably be Scott on his own account and Scott through Cooper. For instance, a good amount of theatrical or stilted dialogue and pseudo-romantic balderdash in situation characterize all three, and the attribution of the original source thereof would not be a matter of pride for anyone concerned. I trust, however, that enough strictly Cooperesque material has been exhibited to indicate rather strongly that Balzac in composing *Le Dernier Chouan* felt the charm of *The Last of the Mohicans*.

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